

Summary of Region 5 Response to USA Today Article 2/27/09

Region 5 ATAB

Completed: We mapped the locations of 1st percentile schools in all 6 states (total of 240 schools) to get an idea where to start investigating. In addition, USA Today's monitoring results were compared to state monitoring, where available. Further, Michigan requested that we investigate a facility (H.C. Starck) based public inquiry into their molybdenum trioxide emissions. Region 5 investigated H.C. Starck's emissions and determined that the high emissions were due to a reporting error in TRI.

Currently ongoing: We are now in the process of comparing the USA Today results to 2002 NATA to see what matches and what does not. Staff are further investigating schools in each state, including comparing facility TRI data to other data sources, such as NEI, state EI, etc. Depending on the results of the investigation, a more refined modeling analysis may be conducted with an improved emissions inventory and source parameters. Additionally, AECAB is in the process of checking compliance status of the companies surrounding the schools. Based on results of modeling, or other knowledge of a specific source, we will consider approaching a facility to seek voluntary reductions. We will include states in any inspections, enforcement actions, or attempts to work with companies toward voluntary reductions.

ATAB has also coordinated with the Region 5 States on the issue to highlight our efforts and to support their efforts. A state-by-state summary is included below.

Illinois

IEPA has not taken an active role in the response. They refer any questions from the public to Region 5.

Indiana

Completed: IDEM developed a response letter for school systems and parents further clarifying the USA Today's study. They did (and continue to) field many calls on this issue.

Currently ongoing: IDEM is planning to use NATA as a secondary screening tool. They continue to get numerous requests from the public to "do something" about the results of the article, and they are currently deliberating on a course of action.

Michigan

Completed: MDEQ recommended one facility (H.C. Starck) to Region 5 for review, based on public comments and MDEQ's initial investigation. We completed our review (see Region 5 activities, above) and found no concerns at this point, only emissions errors.

Minnesota

Completed: Minnesota developed a response letter for school superintendents to further clarify the USA Today's study, in addition to fielding numerous citizen calls.

Ohio

Completed: OEPA developed a response letter for school systems and parents further clarifying the USA Today's study and to present OEPA's air toxics work in the state.

Currently ongoing: RAPCA, a local Ohio agency in Dayton, is doing a review of RSEI risk drivers at schools (typically metals in their area), any ambient metals and PM2.5 speciation data they possess and verifying nearby facility reports and permits. Additionally, local agencies have begun doing unannounced inspections at some facilities identified in the USA Today series.

Wisconsin

Completed: WDNR has compared its own statewide modeling (using RAIMI and its state emission inventory) to the top 2 percentile of schools (approximately 80 schools) from USA Today's RSEI analysis. WDNR examined these schools found that the vast majority of the high rankings to be the results of errors either in the data going into the model or the model operation itself. WDNR hasn't done any monitoring, but two school districts (Green Bay and Saukville) have done some "snapshot" monitoring and found no high levels of toxics in the ambient air.

Currently ongoing: WDNR identified 27 facilities affecting the top 2 percentile of schools and is currently performing additional modeling to compare to USA Today results. They are currently working with companies and U.S. EPA to correct reporting errors in TRI. After they have completed their analysis and review of the report, they want to conduct a "postmortem" on this exercise to capture "lessons learned" to improve data quality and try to prevent inaccurate analyses from occurring in the future.